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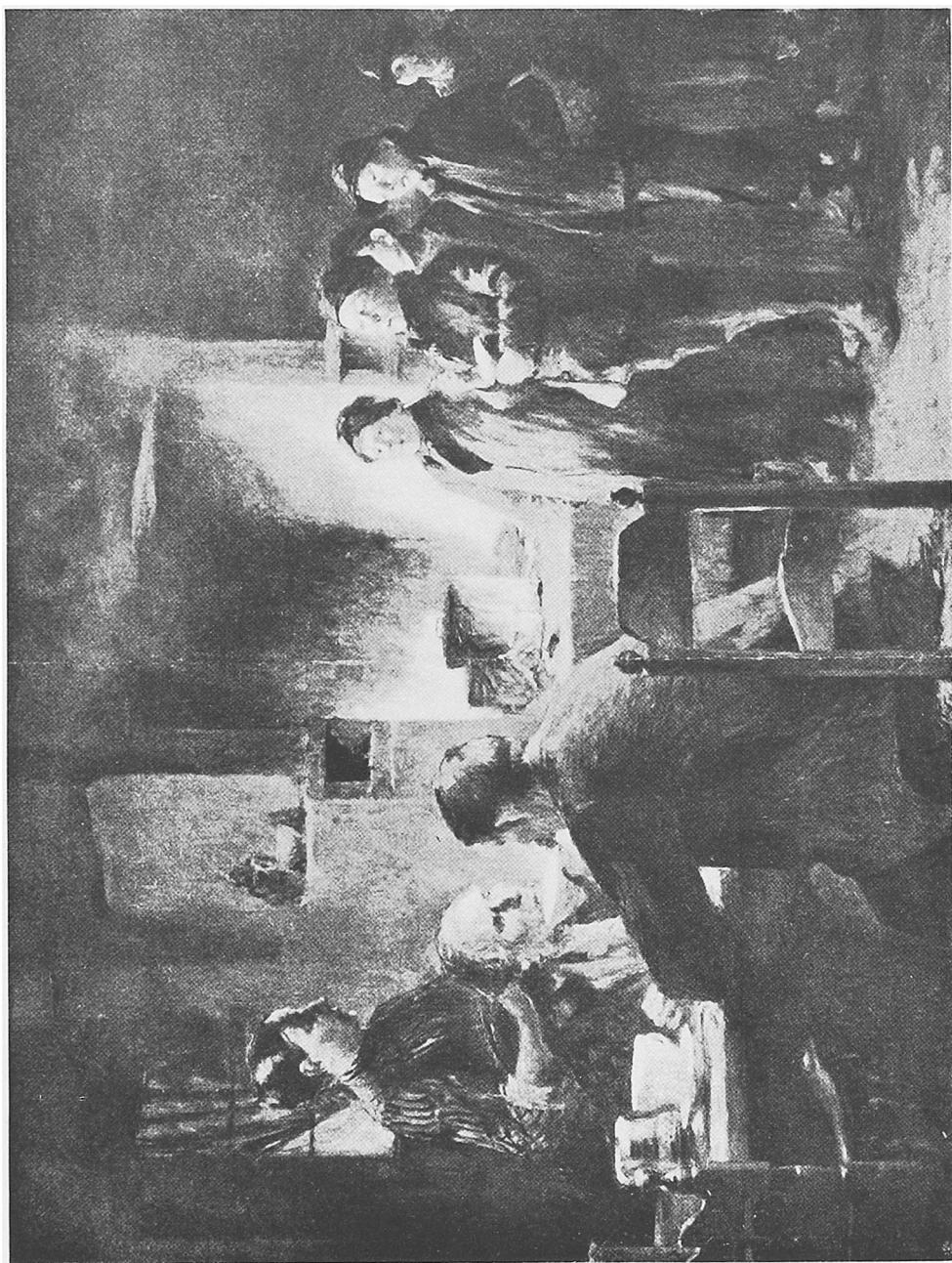
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NEW YEAR'S SINGERS —Schleswig-Holstein  
Original Drawing by Karl Storch

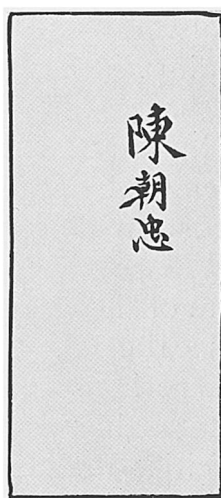
# THE LOTUS MAGAZINE

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR



Chinese New Year's  
Visiting Card

IT may be a matter of thirty-five years ago—possibly longer—that the custom of New Year's calls was abandoned in New York. It came down from the time when New York was a Dutch colony. From old Dutch times to about 1880 New Year's Day in New York was devoted to the universal interchange of visits.

Every door was thrown wide open. It was a breach of etiquette to omit any acquaintance in these annual calls, when old friendships were renewed and family differences amicably settled. A hearty welcome was extended even to strangers of presentable appearance.

Tyrone Power, the actor, the elder of the name, wrote in his diary for January 1st, 1834, that "on this day from an early hour every door in New York is open and all the good things possessed by the inmates paraded in lavish profusion. Every sort of vehicle is put in requisition. At an early hour a gentleman of whom I had a slight knowledge entered my room, accompanied

by an elderly person I had never before seen, and who, on being named, excused himself for adopting such a frank mode of making my acquaintance, which, he was pleased to add, he much desired, and at once requested me to fall in with the custom of the day, whose privilege he had thus availed himself of, and accompany him on a visit to his family.

"I was the last man on earth likely to decline an offer made in such a spirit; so, entering his carriage, which was waiting, we drove to his house on Broadway, where, after being presented to a very amiable lady, his wife, and a pretty, gentle-looking young girl, his daughter, I partook of a sumptuous luncheon, drank a glass of champagne, and, on the arrival of other visitors, made my bow, well pleased with my visit. My host now begged me to make a few calls with him, explaining as we drove along the strict observances paid to this day throughout the State, and tracing the excellent custom to the early Dutch colonists."

Power has been quoted from here because it applies to the later years of the custom as well as to his own time. Not only during the period of which he speaks, but until the custom of New Year's calls went into decline, there

were great feasts spread in many houses, and the traditions of tremendous Dutch eating and drinking were faithfully observed. Special houses were noted for particular forms of entertainment. At one it was eggnog; at another, rum punch; at this one, pickled oysters; at that, boned turkey, or marvellous chocolate, or perfect Mocha coffee, or, for the connoisseur a drop of old Madeira, as soft as rainwater and as delicate in flavor as the texture of the glass from which it was sipped. At all houses there were the New Year's cakes, in the form of an Egyptian cartouch, and in later and more degenerate days relays of champagne-bottles appeared—the coming in of the garish empire of the nouveaux riches.

The gradual breaking down of all the lines of conventionality into a wild and unseemly riot of visits led to the finish of the custom. New Year's calls took on the character of a rabid and untamed race against time. A procession each of parties of two or three young men in open barouches, drawn by steaming horses and with drivers more or less under the "inflo-ence" of the day, rattled from one house to another all day long. The visitors would jump out of the carriage, rush into the house, and reappear in a miraculously short space of time. The ceremony of calling had degenerated into a burlesque. There was a noisy and hilarious greeting, a glass of wine was swallowed hurriedly, everybody shook hands all around, and the callers dashed out and rushed into the carriage and were driven rapidly to the next house. Far more serious than this, however, was the manner in which society women found their houses invaded on the first

day of the year by people with whom they had very slight and sometimes no acquaintance whatever. Politicians of all ranks and degrees looked in upon people who they thought could be useful to them, and especially it was the great army of social upstarts and snobs that used the day for furthering their claims to recognition. Enough complications and embarrassments, in fact, were woven on the first day of the year to employ the tact and resources of society leaders for several months afterward in the work of undoing. The custom was abused until there set in a reaction, which, gathering force with every succeeding year, ended by practically abolishing the custom of New Year's calls.

The Old World custom of sitting up on New Year's night to see the old year out and the new year in is perhaps more general in the United States than anywhere. In many large cities the new year is rung in from some famous local belfry—like Independence Hall, in Philadelphia, and of Trinity Church, in New York. But in New York even this custom had to be abandoned on account of the unruliness of the crowd. Now, Broadway on New Year's eve, is a stream of noisy humanity, which eventually vanishes for feasting and drinking into numerous restaurants.

The fashion of paying New Year's calls, which has now died out with us, is still in vogue in China, but there it is men who receive as well as who pay the visits, Chinese women taking no part whatever in social life. Every Chinaman, except among the very lowest classes, expects to receive visits from his inferiors, and to pay them to those who are above him in station. In



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New Year's Day in New York, 1859  
From "Harper's Weekly," January, 1859



some cases sending a card is deemed sufficient. These cards consist of thin strips of scarlet paper with the name of the sender written on them in black characters. Sometimes good wishes are added.

The most charming of the many German New Year's customs is one observed from time immemorial in Frankfurt-on-the-Main. There, at the same moment, the whole city salutes itself—wishes itself a happy New Year.

On the night of December 31st (Sylvester-Abend) all the city keeps the festival, watching the old year out and the new year in. Family parties or gatherings of friends are to be found in every house. Games, stories, music, and kindred diversions, with an honorable attention to eating and drinking, serve to speed on the last hours of the dying year.

Suddenly, at the exact moment when from the great dome of the cathedral the first stroke of midnight sounds its warning, every house throws wide open its windows. Forth from the casements lean all the dwellers in the town, old and young together, each with glass in hand. The glass is raised on high, and the words of the toast burst on the astonished air of night in one massive tone, born of more than a hundred thousand voices, joined in the cry, "Pros't Neujahr!" ("Happy New Year!")

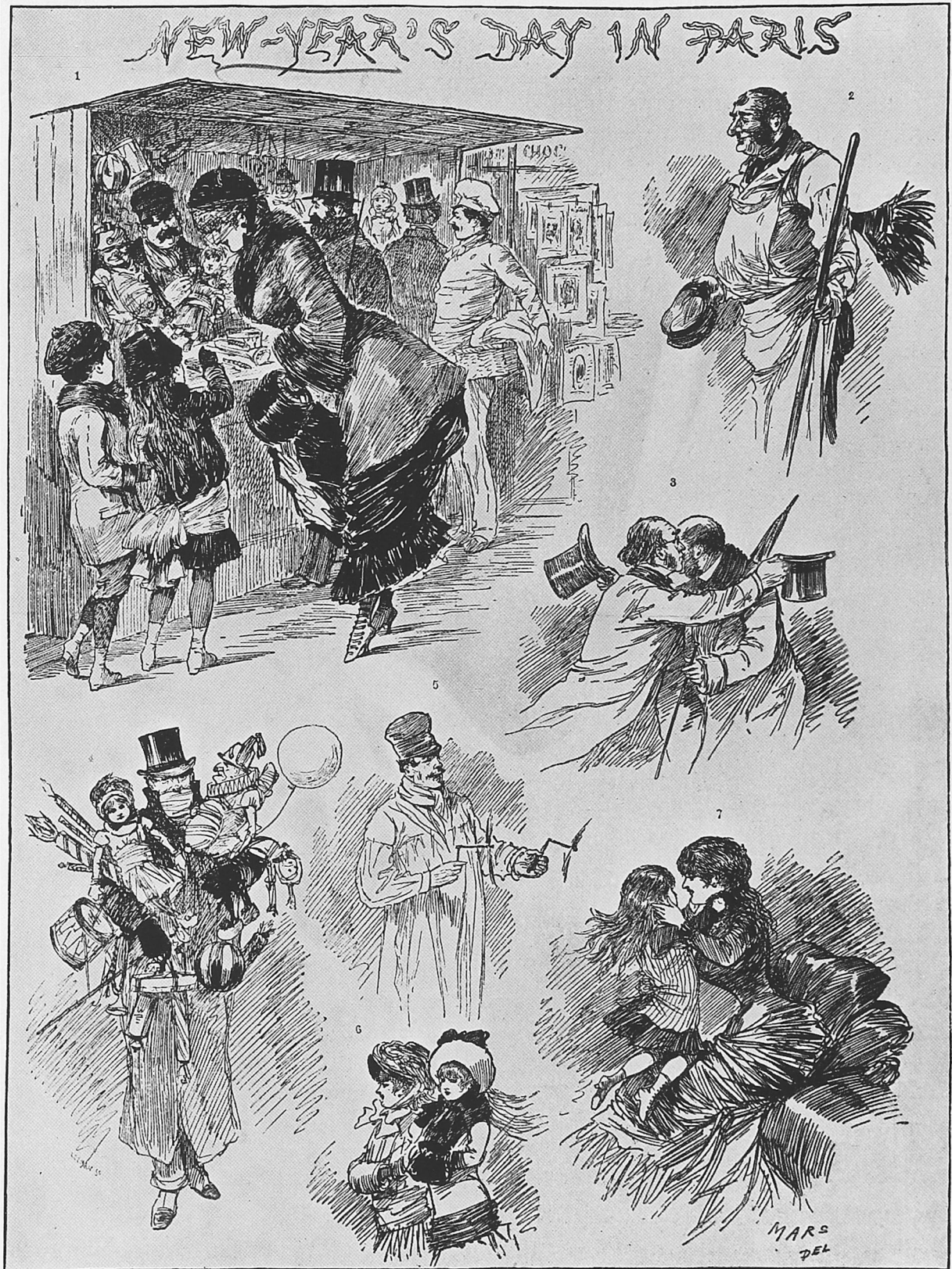
The whole city thus salutes itself with the greeting of the season, invoking a blessing for the coming year in its first moment. The sonorous majesty of the sentiment sends out its echoing clamors for a few brief seconds, then ceases. Before the last clang of the twelve from the cathedral's dome has melted into silence the toast of the

hour has been drunk, the windows have been closed, and the hush of midnight settles once more over the deserted streets of the city.

At Vienna on New Year's Day the Emperor and the archduchess, representing the Empress, hold what is known as a "cercle." Each class of visitors who call to present their good wishes for the new year is assigned to a particular apartment, the diplomatic corps being relegated to one, the judiciary to another, the navy to a third, and so on. The Emperor, escorted by the grand officials of his household, enters each apartment in turn with the archduchess, and immediately on his being announced by the grand master of ceremonies all the ladies take up their positions on one side of the room and the men on the other.

The Emperor, with one of his chamberlains, then passes slowly along the side of the room where the men are stationed, and says a few words to each, while the archduchess, escorted by the mistress of the robes to the Empress, does the same on the other side. On reaching the farther end the Emperor returns along the front rank of the ladies, while the archduchess passes in front of the men.

France also has its official function, while in the popular eye New Year's Day is the greatest festival of the year. It is in France what Christmas is in England and America, the day for giving and receiving presents (known as *étrennes*). The abuse of this practice is great. The *étrennes* have nearly reached the climax of representing nothing more than such a conventional sense of duty as the leaving of a card betokens here. It is even said that they are constantly transferred



From "The Illustrated London News," January 7, 1882

1. A Shop on the Boulevard  
4. Presents for the Children

2. The Concièrge on New Year's Day  
5. Toy Vender  
7. A Happy New Year to Mamma

3. A New Year's Day Salutation  
6. Going Shopping

from hand to hand till at last they may circulate back into the hands of the original givers.

Yet New Year's remains the great family day of France. In the morning the children jump up and (after examining their stockings to see what St. Nicholas has brought them) rush off to the chamber of their parents to salute them and offer their good wishes for the new year. If a member of the family has died during the year, all the near relatives assemble at the grave early in the morning, renewing flowers and ornaments. After the mid-day meal the younger members of the family call upon the older ones, and in the evening they all meet for dinner at the home of the oldest member, who

is considered the head of the family. When the French speak of their family it is in a broad sense, and includes all the relatives.

All day long Paris is noisy with crowds going to and fro. The fashionable parts of the city are a forest of carriages, buggies and hacks, standing at every door, and whirling back and forth in feverish haste. The children, gayly decked out with ribbons and flowers, wander with their mothers or their nurses along the streets, and gaze with loud delight into the dazzling windows of the shops. And, indeed, nothing can be more brilliant than the shop-windows of Paris on this day, especially those of the confectioners, the toy-sellers, and the jewellers.



New Year's Visiting Card of 1814



New Year's Visiting Card of 1760